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CAN FIFTH GRADE PUPILS BENEFIT FROM AN ADULT RAPID READING METHOD.

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FIFTEEN FIFTH GRADERS FROM SCHOOLS IN MCHENRY, ILLINOIS, TOOK PART IN A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHETHER FIFTH-GRADE CHILDREN WITH AVERAGE READING ABILITY WOULD INCREASE THEIR READING RATES WITHOUT LOSS OF COMPREHENSION WHILE USING AN ADULT RAPID-READING METHOD. SIXTEEN O. HENRY-TYPE STORIES RANGING FROM THIRD- TO SIXTH-GRADE LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY WERE USED WITH THE "REINFORCED READING METHOD." THE STORIES WERE READ IN CLASS ON THE SHADOWSCOPE AND ON PACERS, AND THEN WERE TAKEN HOME FOR FURTHER PRACTICE. THE 50-MINUTE SESSION MET ONCE A WEEK FOR 5 WEEKS. PRETEST AND POST-TEST RESULTS AND RESPONSES TO THE 10 QUESTIONS WHICH FOLLOWED EACH OF THE STORIES WERE EVALUATED ON LITERAL AND CRITICAL COMPREHENSION LEVELS. THIS EVALUATION REVEALED THAT THE SUBJECTS DOUBLED THEIR READING RATES WITHOUT LOSS OF COMPREHENSION WHILE USING THE "REINFORCED READING METHOD." THIS PILOT STUDY SUGGESTS THE NEED FOR GIVING MORE ATTENTION TO READING RATE IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES AND THAT THEORIES TRADITIONALLY USED IN COLLEGE AND ADULT-LEVEL READING INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE EXPLORED TO DETERMINE THEIR VALUE TO ELEMENTARY READING INSTRUCTION. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL READING CONFERENCE (TAMPA, NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 2, 1967). (NS)

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CAN FIFTH GRADE PUPILS BENEFIT FROM AN ADULT RAPID READING METHOD?

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The logical time to stress rapid silent reading and skimming is in the fifth grade. At this point the average child has developed sufficiently his word recognition abilities. He is now "on his own in reading."

For at least seventy years there has been dialogue and some limited research on how to increase rates of silent reading in the elementary levels (3). Since Buswell's (1) studies in the 1930's, however, the emphasis on rapid reading has shifted to the upper academic levels. This, no doubt, is due to the intense "knowledge explosion" which is bringing college and adult students into reading improvement courses. It only seems natural that many students ask why they were not taught to read and skim much faster in the earlier years.

Theoretically, a fifth grade child can be taught to read faster than word-for-word on materials, providing that the level of difficulty is one or more levels below his instructional level. This has not been the case. According to Gray & Reese(2) the average fifth grade pupil reads about 180 words per minute, a rate much lower than the usual 250 wpm word-for-word speed. Teachers traditionally have emphasized deeper and more critical analyses of more complex reading texts. This, of course, is essential and proper in the development of pupils' abilities to read. But, while the child learns to develop phases of his vocabulary and comprehension, his rates of reading should not continue to be relatively ignored.

This fall, therefore, a pilot rapid reading study was conducted to determine whether fifth grade pupils could increase their rates of reading without significant loss of comprehension when using an adult rapid reading method. More specifically, it was tentatively hypothesized that fifth grade pupils who have demonstrated average reading ability would at least double their reading rates while using the 2R (Reinforced Reading) method with fifth grade materials.

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PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

In order to achieve the purpose of the pilot study, four steps were taken: selecting the subjects, combining an appropriate method with mater-

ials for instruction, administering pre and posttests, and analyzing the data.

Selection of the Subjects: The fifteen subjects of the pilot study were selected from several fifth grade classrooms in McHenry, Illinois, a village sixty miles northwest of Chicago. They were considered representative of a culturally stable neighborhood of middle class socio-economic background. Nine boys and six girls were selected on the basis of fifth grade equivalent reading scores on the California Reading Test, Elementary Level.

Method and Materials: The 2R (Reinforced Reading) Method (5) based on psychological principles of reinforcement and transfer was adapted for fifth grade pupils. The seven steps of the Reinforced Reading "Or Alert" Method are as follows:

O-verview (Read first and last paragraphs. Guess about the story)
R-ead at predetermined rate (e.g.) (250 words per minute)
A-nswer questions (70% comprehension is adequate, but 80% is desired)
L-ocate mistakes by going back to look within the story
E-xamine causes of mistakes
R-eread story at same rate (250 wpm)
T-ransfer mastery of story at 250 wpm to next article

Combined with the 2R Method were sixteen O. Henry type stories written by John A. Hurst, children's author.

The first day the subjects read two third grade level of difficulty (Flesch Readability Scale) stories on the Shadowscope (Psychotechnics, Inc.) and SRA reading pacers. They also read in class and took home for practice 6 fourth, 6 fifth, and 2 sixth grade stories. They were to begin reading easy materials and stretch up to the sixth grade level before taking the posttest. Ten questions followed each story; most were multiple choice. The literal and critical levels of comprehension were evaluated.

Administration of the Tests: Pre and posttests of fifth grade reading level of difficulty were to be administered at the beginning and end of a five week duration. The subjects met for a 50 minute period once a week. At the final meeting, the posttest (which was prepared under the direction of the author) contained unfamiliar french terms; therefore, the writer substituted an available sixth grade posttest.

Analysis of the Data: The data was analyzed with simple descriptive techniques. A gross gain in words per minute and per cent of gain was computed to measure increase in rate of reading. A gross gain and per cent of gain also was used to measure comprehension.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

As a preliminary evaluation of the adapted 2R Method and the Hurst stories, the writer compared the results of the pre and posttests in Table I.

TABLE I

Results of 2R Method of Speeding Comprehension on Hurst Stories (N=15)

	Pretest 5th Grade Level	Posttest 6th Grade Level	Gross Gain	Per Cent Gain
Mean reading rate (in words per minute)	157	622	465	296.2
Mean per cent of comprehension	72.8	69.0	-03.8	-05.5

Considering the difficulty of the posttest (6th grade level) compared with the pretest (5th grade level), the results indeed show improvement. The subjects are reading harder material almost four times faster than initially with an insignificant loss of comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Substantiated by the findings, the tentative hypothesis is upheld. The fifth grade pupils did at least double their rates of reading without significant loss of comprehension while reading at least fifth grade stories and using an adult rapid reading method.

Since this was a pilot study, however, there are some obvious limitations, such as:

1) the subjects met only once a week with no follow-up on the 2R method by their classroom teachers

2) as invaluable as was the help of the parents, the degree and help was not measurable

3) the stories and tests were being field tested and did need some adjusting

4) there was no introduction to possible "stumble words" on stories prior to the pre and posttesting.

In spite of the above limitations or handicaps, the results of the pilot study were surprisingly good. Certainly this study suggests that more work in improving rates of reading at the intermediate and above levels needs to be done. Further exploration into adapting the newer theories and pedagogy found at the college and adult reading levels undoubtedly will prove valuable to elementary school teachers.

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